

Her Perfect Indifference

By Louise J. Strong

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"Why, Stella, where is your ring?" Daisy seized the hand that was slipping itself under the bonbon box as if to conceal its nakedness.

"Returned to the jeweler at a discount likely, or whatever fellows do with discarded engagement rings," Stella laughed, with some constraint. "You don't mean to say that you and Ned—"

"Yes, I do!" Stella interrupted. "You might as well know it; everybody will soon."

"I couldn't be more astonished if the sky had fallen! Why, you and Ned were the most utterly—"

"Appearances are often deceitful," Stella observed, with a wise air, interrupting again. "I suppose you thought I was—well, as they say—entirely 'gone' on Ned."

"That's right! Might one ask the why?"

"One might. We simply found that we were mistaken in our interest in each other. Isn't that sufficient?"

"Sufficient, if true. But I don't believe it—not a little bit! Why, if there were ever a pair of turtles—"

"You can believe it or not, but I am entirely and perfectly indifferent to Mr. Ned Whiting—and he returns it fully."

"I don't believe it, when you two were so intensely devoted to—it's only a silly quarrel."

"We did not quarrel," Stella asserted coldly. "And if you have observed his conduct with that plain, poky Lewis girl you cannot say much for his devotion to me."

"I shouldn't call her exactly plain, though she isn't a beauty. And there may be reasons—besides, he has not been so very—"

"He has been so very that you have noticed it, I see," Stella interrupted sarcastically.

"But she is visiting in town and has not many acquaintances here. I doubt if Ned has been more than polite. Did he explain?"

"There was nothing to explain—there was absolutely nothing he could say



THERE SAT—OR WAS IT HIS SPIRIT?

for himself, as I told him when he attempted it. I asked him to drop her, and if he had cared half as much for me as he professed to care he wouldn't have hesitated an instant. But of course it doesn't matter at all. I care as little for him as he does for me. Really, I did not realize till this happened my indifference to him." She yawned elaborately, then added, with animation: "I am going on the loveliest trip with Charley in his new auto. I told Bill Smith all about it on purpose. I knew Mr. Whiting would hear of it." Her eyes snapped triumphantly.

"Your ring was too exquisite," Daisy murmured regretfully. "Think of Laura Lewis carrying off such a trophy when she goes home!"

"I wonder if he will give it to her," Stella started up angrily. "I would have pounded it to pieces before his face if I had dreamed of such a thing!" Then at Daisy's smile she leaned back, yawning again. "But of course it's nothing to me. Let her wear her old secondhand rings if she likes!"

"Secondhand rings is good. I'll look out that the one I'm offered is not such," Daisy laughed.

"Well!"

Stella's rejoinder was cut short by her small brother, who burst upon them excitedly, yelling: "Stell! Stell! What do you think! Ned Whiting's bicycle smashed into—where's mother? I've got to!" He vanished, heedless of the wild shrieks with which Stella received his news.

"Oh, Billie! Billie! Is he killed? Is my Ned killed? Billie! Billie!"

But Billie was flying down the street again. Evidently a terrible accident had befallen Ned Whiting. Stella fluttered about, wringing her hands, mourning: "Oh, Ned, Ned! Dead this minute—when I've been saying such horrible things of you—and lies, too, every one of them!"

She suddenly snatched a hat and dashed away, oblivious of her kimono and slippers. She reached the corner just in time to be pulled aboard the

crowded car, dizzy and breathless.

"Near thing," the man next to her remarked, examining her unusual attire curiously. "Hastening to see the game?"

"It's a matter of life and death!" she sobbed hysterically. Exclamations of sympathy buzzed about her. One held her hat while she put up her hair. Another offered to step the car at her destination.

Where would Ned be? She had not thought of that. Not away out at his home on the other side of the city, there had not been time to remove—she could not finish the thought. She would go to his office. There seemed no other way of—

She gazed in wide-eyed horror as they swept into the vicinity. All was quiet, no commotion, not a sign of any accident. She could not wait for the elevator boy, but flew up the stairs and into the office. There sat—or was it his spirit? She dropped into a chair and stared dumbly at the astonished young man a moment, then tumbled over in a faint.

Frightened almost out of his senses, Ned carried her to the couch. It seemed to him that nothing short of the annihilation of her home and family could account for her tumultuous appearance in such garb and her utter collapse.

"Oh, Ned," she whispered weakly, rousing under his ministrations. "I thought you were killed! Billie said your bicycle—and—Oh, are you sure, sure that you are alive and uninjured?" She pulled herself up and considered him anxiously.

"Billie! The little rascal! I wasn't touched. The wheel is smashed, but he knew I—it is one of his tricks! Just let me get hold of him, scaring you like this!"

She remembered suddenly and made an effort to release herself, donning a freer dignity. He laughed and held her closer.

"Miss Mayne, I don't believe you do hate me so entirely as you imagined you did. Please let me put the ring upon that dear little finger again, and let me tell you that Laura and Cousin Dick—but it is a secret yet, and he asked me to pay her some attention while here."

"Oh!" Stella ejaculated shamefacedly, her eyes on the circle sparkling in its old place.

"We were a couple of idiots! Billie served us right. We ought to thank him!" Ned declared.

"Yes," she murmured humbly.

Baked Beans.

It is not necessary to add pork to a dish of baked beans, and those who entertain a prejudice against the meat of the scrofulous pig may well substitute a lump of butter. Measure out a quart of white pea beans. Put them to soak overnight in three quarts of cold water. The orthodox dish to bake them in is an unglazed pipkin of earthenware, with a handle and cover. In the morning drain them and rinse them thoroughly in clear cold water. Then put them back in the pipkin in which they have been soaking, add a tablespoonful of salt, an even tablespoonful of molasses and a teaspoonful of mustard. Stir all thoroughly around in the pot. Put a heaping tablespoonful of butter down the center of the beans. Cover them with cold water, so that it rises two inches above them. Put them in a hot oven at 8 o'clock in the morning and let them cook steadily till 5 in the afternoon, renewing the water as often as it boils off them. Let them brown down in the pot the last hour, and they will be done at 6 o'clock.—New York Tribune.

Making It Pleasant For Them.

Aunt Abigail had consented at last to give her house an external treatment for chronic shabbiness.

The painters did a good job, finishing the front steps last, but forgot to put a board across the balusters to keep persons from running up or down the steps, and the good dame did not observe the oversight.

While she was clearing away the supper dishes an hour or two after the painters had gone there came a ring at the front door bell.

Aunt Abigail, full of wrath, hastened to the door and opened it.

There stood the pastor and his wife.

"I'm delighted to see you, Mr. and Mrs. Baxter," she said, with a frosty smile. "I'm delighted to see you, but I just knew somebody would come up those freshly painted steps before they were dry. Come right in and make yourselves at home, and don't forget, for goodness' sake, to wipe your feet on this mat inside!"—Chicago Tribune.

The Helpful Word.

Give the young and struggling a word of encouragement when you can. You would not leave those plants in your window boxes without water nor refuse to open the shutters that the sunlight might fall upon them, but you would leave some human flower to suffer from want of appreciation or the sunlight of encouragement. There are a few hardy souls that can struggle along on stony soil—shrubs that can wait for the dews and sunbeams, vines that climb without kindly training—but only a few. Utter the kind word when you can see that it is deserved. The thought that "no one cares and no one knows" blights many a bud of promise. Be it the young artist at his easel, the young preacher in his pulpit, the workman at his bench, the boy at his mathematical problems or your little girl at the piano, give what praise you can.

Of course the new Prime Minister of England is a Scotchman, but there is still some anxiety over here as to whether he is also qualified as a golf player.

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